

Basic Garden Watering Tips/Strategies

Toledo GROWs Best Practices— Tending a Garden

Best Practices

The most important fundamental to watering: water deeply. The majority of a plant's roots grow abundantly where the most moisture is available. When moisture is more consistent at a deeper level in the soil, the majority of the roots will spread out and grow downward. The plant has more access to nutrients in soil and experiences less stress because it does not dry out. A healthier, hydrated plant means higher yields and juicy, delicious, high nutrient vegetables.

You will also water less frequently because it takes moisture much longer to wick up through the soil and evaporate out at the surface. If plants are watered shallowly, their roots grow upward to reach the moisture. Since the top layers of the soil dry out faster, root systems experience extreme cycles of moistness and dryness. This causes plant stress, resulting in smaller sized vegetables, lower yields, higher rates of disease and insects, and blossom end rot in tomatoes.

Tips and Tricks

You will need to determine the balance between too wet and too dry for your garden's microenvironment. Some best-practice strategies:

- **Do not over water;** plants do not like to sit in mucky soil for long periods of time.
- **Keep seeds and seedlings constantly moist**
 - ◊ The hard outer coating must soften over time so the seedling can break through.
 - ◊ Seedling roots are very shallow and prone to drying out—deep watering encourages deeper rooting.
- **Water in the morning (next best is early afternoon -but water when you can)**
 - ◊ Water percolates down into the soil before the heat of the day
 - ◊ Plants are already hydrated when they need it most in the hot afternoons—less stress – healthier, higher yielding, and tastier more nutritious vegetables.
 - ◊ Constant evening watering promotes a cycle of stress and disease - moisture evaporates slowly and tends to sit on plant parts.
- **Water close to the ground using the proper implements**
 - ◊ Use a hose wand, watering can with a rose head or slow drip system so the water is aerated and strikes the ground softly.
 - ◊ If a classic hose spray nozzle is used, the water that strikes the ground hard and does not initially penetrate the soil but spreads out over a larger, shallower surface area.
(You use more water, spend more time, and the water does not percolate down deeply into the soil.)
 - ◊ Water close to the ground keeping the plants dry. Soft strike water absorbs better the closer to the ground it is applied and does not compact soil. Hard strike water splashes soil-borne diseases up on to plants
- **Optional mulch (dried untreated grass, straw, shredded leaves, aged compost)**
 - ◊ This helps to keep moisture from evaporating - offering moisture consistency and less time spent watering it helps soften the water strike force for better soil penetration
 - ◊ Protects plant leaves from splashing soil disease pathogens.

Contact Us

Give us a call for more information about our services

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